

Introduction

This plan serves as the comprehensive management and use plan for the California and the Pony Express National Historic Trails. It also updates the existing Comprehensive Management and Use Plans for the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails that were developed in 1981. The selected goals and actions proposed in this document will provide overall administrative and management direction for all four trails for at least the next 15 to 20 years.

The alternatives presented assume that for each specific provision, **ALL** four trails would be equally affected. However, in instances where the proposed actions would be pertinent only to a specific trail, they are clearly indicated.

Some elements of these alternatives were part of the original plans for the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails. The Oregon plan established a 0.5-mile protection corridor for all the high-potential segments. The Mormon Pioneer plan identified short- and long-term resource inventory and monitoring strategies.

Two alternatives for the administration of the trails are presented in this document. Both alternatives aim to balance resource preservation and visitor use, thus satisfying the purposes of the National Trails System Act “to provide for the outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population” and “to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the nation.”

Alternative 1 (continuation of current conditions) reflects the wide variability in administration and management, resource protection strategies, interpretation, visitor experience, and use that exists today. The alternative notes how resource protection, trail marking, and interpretation have been ongoing processes and how increasing levels of cooperation and coordination are becoming more common among the various trail partners.

Alternative 2 (the proposal—enhanced conditions and a historic trails partnership) focuses on attaining the highest possible degree of resource protection and an enhanced public experience through education and the direct retracing of trails segments. This would be accomplished through cooperation among all trail partners, increasing awareness of the need to work together, and communicating what is being planned and what is actually being done. It calls for the development of a comprehensive strategy for resource protection, including an ambitious program to inventory and monitor resources. This program would bring together, in one location, information currently dispersed among the various partners.

The alternatives presented in this plan emphasize the evolving nature of trail resources in terms of their historic significance and their degree of integrity. The assessment of their significance may change as research reveals new information. Resource integrity may also be reassessed in light of additional data. An interpretive program that permits visitors to retrace routes and interact with resources and flexible enough to incorporate the latest research would be an essential component of both alternatives.

For the management of the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails, provisions regarding site certification, resource monitoring, the servicewide memorandum of understanding, and revisions to the lists of high-potential sites and segments, and others would be as described in the proposal (alternative 2).

The descriptions of the alternatives are divided into three sections that correspond with the administrative objectives identified for this plan — administration and management; resource protection; interpretation, visitor experience, and use. The proposal also includes a fourth section on recommended studies that would apply to both alternatives. Tables 11 and 12 at the end of this section summarize the alternatives and the projected impacts from implementing the alternatives.